



## Featured Article:

### *Billy B. rocks schools with science, music & dance*

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#### **By Kate Evans**

*Bill Brennan as Billy B., the natural science song and dance man, thrilled Morgan County students with his fun, interactive and high-energy Water Wonders environmental education shows from September 29 through October 2. He also did a Friday, October 2 performance at the Ice House.*

*Kids at Pleasant View Elementary danced, sang, clapped, did movements and boogied in place to Brennan's blues, rock and reggae tunes as they learned about the earth's fresh water and salt water, erosion, rain, fish, water quality, watersheds, bays, conservation and the consequences of littering.*

*Students and staff were captivated by Brennan's guitarplaying, original science songs and lively, entertaining style of teaching science. Brennan's original songs included "It's Happening Today in Everybody's Bay," "The Estuary Song" and "That's Runoff, Man." Audiences got lessons about nature and the environment and learned a little rock and roll and blues history.*

*The Morgan Arts Council sponsored his Adopt-a-School performances, which were partly funded by grants from the National Endowment For the Arts, the West Virginia Commission on the Arts and the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation.*

*Brennan gave his Water World shows at Pleasant View Elementary, Paw Paw Schools, Greenwood Elementary, Warm Springs Middle School and Wind Dance Farm & Earth Education Center.*

#### **Interconnectedness**

*Brennan told the crowd about how all life on the earth is interconnected and to be careful about their actions. Birds and animals had become very ill or even died from ingesting plastic or were hit or killed by cars as they tried to retrieve trash on roadsides that they thought was food. The Cuyahoga River in Ohio had even caught fire from all the oil people had dumped alongside it.*

*Brennan shared what people can do to keep the water clean and preserve the earth's environment: plant trees and bushes, don't throw trash out the car window or litter, turn off lights and don't waste electricity and walk or ride a bicycle if it's a short distance.*

#### **Billy B's beginnings**

*Brennan's blend of environmental science and entertainment got its start in 1977 when he was studying to be a teacher as an education major and a dance minor at the University of Wisconsin.*

*Brennan's professor Mary Hibbard for his "Dance in Childhood Education" class assigned the project of creating a dance program for the classroom. He was doing his practicum with a first grade teacher in Milwaukee who was teaching their kids about trees at the time.*

*Brennan decided to teach kids about trees through the dance program project he had to do. His 1975 "Singing Tree" program had rhyming chants that accompanied the dance movements. Street performing for a year in Europe gave him performing expertise to draw on for his programs.*

*Brennan had written songs since he was 16 and started playing guitar in 1970. He wrote his first children's tune "Yippie Hooray, I am a Sprout" based on an original poem. Brennan recorded his first recording "Billy B sings about Trees" in 1978 which began his career teaching children about science through song and dance.*

*Brennan began a lifelong journey of studying the world and natural science, which he incorporates into his shows.*

#### **Engages kids to learn**

*Kids want to participate so Brennan plugs into their natural style of learning and weaves in wacky sounds, repeating lines and words and frequent gestures, movements and dancing into his shows. Kids don't even realize they're learning science terminology and concepts as they have fun, he said.*

*Brennan said that schools are the very heart of what he does. "My job is to light the school up," he said. Brennan was excited when Pleasant View Elementary student started making the motion beforehand that he was going to show kids to do to accompany his song. "That's as good as it gets," Brennan said.*